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UNCLAS HARARE 002311

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR CGURNEY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER
PARIS FOR NEARY
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID SEIZURE

11. (U) SUMMARY. The seizure on Thursday, October 17 of 3 metric tons of food by ZANU-PF activists in Insiza was the first documented incident of international food aid theft and partisan redistribution. The Government has denied the allegations and tried to divert attention from ZANU-PF food aid theft to British involvement in food distribution. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) On Friday, October 18, the World Food Program indefinitely suspended food distributions in Insiza district, Matebeleland South, where a parliamentary by-election is scheduled to take place October 26-27. ZANU-PF activists seized 3 metric tons of food from WFP, implementing partner, Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), on Thursday October 17 and began distributing it in an unauthorized manner. A relatively small portion of the food seized was U.S.-donated cooking oil. (NOTE: Mrs. Sithembiso Nyoni, who is now Minister of Small and Medium Enterprise Development, founded ORAP in 1981. Both political parties have accused ORAP of being partisan in its relief activities but checks by us and WFP have shown ORAP to be diligently implementing WFP distribution guidelines. END NOTE) Explaining WFP's decision to suspend operations in Insiza, WFP country director Kevin Farrell told journalists that WFP will only distribute its food on the basis of need without regard to political affiliation. He said WFP is seeking assurances from the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) that such incidents will not take place again.

13. (U) ZANU-PF dismissed the report as false and tried to paint WFP as not being nonpartisan. In the government controlled newspaper, The Herald, Jonathan Moyo, Minister of State for Information and Publicity insisted that the WFP was being used to further British political interests in Insiza and challenged the WFP to assure the country that the British are not directing it. "While we appreciate assistance from well-meaning quarters, whether from WFP or anyone else," Moyo said, "we are not going to allow it to compromise our sovereignty." The state media, controlled by Moyo, also claimed implausibly that ORAP was controlled by MDC activists bent on distributing food in a partisan manner.

14. (U) The raid on the food distribution depot occurred the day after Jonathan Moyo told journalists that the British High Commissioner was ordering all NGOs to distribute food to MDC supporters ahead of the Insiza by-election but the same day the story appeared in the state-run newspaper. Moyo reiterated that the British High Commissioner should desist from meddling in Zimbabwe internal affairs. The British High Commission issued a statement on October 17 denying these allegations.

15. (SBU) The GOZ is appropriately concerned about the WFP food suspension and public statements. WFP Director Kevin Farrell and Minister of Social Welfare July Moyo will travel to Insiza October 21 to address the issues.

16. (U) ACTION: Post recommends State issue a statement expressing outrage and concern about the seizure and partisan use of international food aid and we plan to issue a statement in Harare as well. We are sending proposed language to the Department separately. We are also urging WFP to insist on return of the food, although we do not recommend making this point public as yet.
SULLIVAN